GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4063
ANSWERED ON:22.04.2008
IMPORT OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES
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Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) the commodity-wise, year-wise and country-wise details of the import of essential commodities in the country during the last three years and in the current year, till date;

(b) whether the import of essential commodities has increased more than 11 per cent during the above period;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(d) whether due to increase in import of essential commodities consumers have been affected by price rise;

(e) if so, whether the Government is planning to rectify the same in the interest of consumers; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY(SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH)

(a) to (c) Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution monitors the prices of 14 essential food commodities. These items include Rice, Wheat, Atta, Gram Dal, Tur (Arhar) Dal, Sugar, Groundnut Oil, Mustard Oil, Vanaspati, Tea, Milk, Potato, Onion and Salt (iodised). Commodity-wise, year-wise and country-wise details of import of these items are given in publication, 'Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade of India; Vol.II (Imports), Annual Number' published by Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, which is available in the Library of the Parliament.

(d) to (f) Import of essential commodities would in fact tend to reduce the domestic prices. Foreign Trade Policy is modulated to ensure access of commodities which are essential for meeting the requirements of consumers in the country.Government has taken a number of steps to protect the consumers from increase in prices of essential food commodities.These steps, inter alia include:

(i) Export of wheat, non-basmati rice, pulses (except kabuli chana) and edible oils has been banned.

(ii) Import duty on wheat, rice, pulses and crude edible oils has been reduced to zero.Import duty on refined oils and that on hydrogenated vegetable oils has been reduced to 7.5%.The import duty on butter and ghee has been reduced to 30%.

(iii) Central Government has issued a Central Order under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 enabling State Governments to invoke stock limits in respect of wheat, pulses, edible oils, oilseeds and rice.The Order is valid up to 31.8.2008.